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WORKING DOCUMENT

CRP Evaluation Update

Submitted by:
Independent Evaluation Arrangement

The main objective of the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA), established in 2013, is to ensure the evaluation function is a key and effective instrument of accountability and learning, fully contributing to the shaping and vision of the future CGIAR. This is realized through comprehensive evaluation coverage of CGIAR, detailed in the regular IEA four-year Rolling Evaluation Work Plan. Whereas the 2015 workplan and budget of IEA have been submitted for approval, this document serves to provide brief information on the status of CRP evaluations in CGIAR and their current use and focus.

Schedule and focus of CGIAR CRP evaluations

By spring 2015, IEA is scheduled to complete four CRP evaluations (PIM, Maize, Wheat, and AAS). Simultaneously, IEA will be conducting 5 other CRP evaluations (CCAFS, Livestock and Fish, GRiSP, WLE and RTB) which are to be finalized by Spring 2016, along with the validation and quality assurance assessment provided by IEA on the 5 CRP commissioned external evaluations (Dryland systems, Humid Tropics, Dryland Cereals, Grain Legumes, A4NH). Therefore, by spring 2016, IEA will be able to deliver 10 full evaluations, as well as provide quality assurance assessment on 5 CRP-commissioned evaluations.

The CGIAR evaluation standards provide guidance on evaluation coverage and serve to define the evaluation criteria for evaluations in CGIAR: Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, Efficiency, Quality of Science, and Sustainability. Harmonization of approach and scope across the CRP evaluations is ensured by IEA, while also respecting the different status and stages of implementation of each CRP. In terms of assessing outcomes, the evaluation relies on the availability of relevant outcome or impact studies that directly relate to past research. For current research, or for research which has not yet matured into outcomes, the evaluation focuses on assessing the processes and systems in place, as well as the validity of the Theories of Change, progress and outputs to make a judgment on the likelihood of achieving results.

Utility of Evaluations

The evaluations in the scheduled IEA program of work serve multiple purposes: (1) evaluative input for CRP Management to enhance the work of the CRP; (2) input and information for system-wide strategic development (SRF, MTR), including 2nd call for CRP funding; and (3) establishing a comprehensive set of CRP evaluations in preparation for the system-wide evaluation scheduled for 2017.

In July 2014, IEA completed its first full CRP evaluation: Forests, Trees and Agroforestry¹. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations covered aspects such as scientific priorities, programmatic focus,

¹ FTA evaluation report, along with the synthesis report and management response were submitted to Fund Council by IEA for consideration at FC12 meeting

and comparative advantage as well as governance and management and conditions for future success. These recommendations were addressed to both the CRP Management as well as the CGIAR governing bodies influencing CRP implementation. FTA CRP Management provided an official response to the evaluation fully accepting 10 of the recommendations and partially accepting (and providing further background) to the remaining 2 recommendations. More importantly, and as a concrete example of the immediate utility of an evaluation, FTA CRP Management provided a number of short and long term actions being taken to address the evaluation findings and recommendations, some of which had already been implemented.

In terms of strategic system-wide use, the IEA review of CRP governance and management as well as the CRP FTA evaluation have both provided concrete, and similar, recommendations on CRP governance and management which have been discussed across the system, and also been referred to extensively in the draft Mid-Term Review. One recommendation, emerging from both exercises, highlights the need to empower CRP Directors to manage for development results.

In addition, and based on findings from the CRP-FTA evaluation, IEA provided input to the draft accountability section of the SRF focusing on the “realism” and practicality of the proposed system. Key issues which need to be taken into account in designing an effective accountability and learning framework include: i) difficulties of attributing research activities to development outcomes, ii) available resources, time and methodology for monitoring results, iii) lack of reliable methodology to compare the value for money across very different types of results, and iv) considerable time-lags between activities and outcomes, which diminishes the value of outcomes for adaptive management. Such examples of providing information and input from CRPs on strategic system level issues will increase with the finalization of on-going evaluations.

One essential step to ensure use and effectiveness of evaluations is to clearly define and establish a formal process and procedures through which the CRP evaluations commissioned by the IEA are finalized, submitted and formally responded to, and recommendations are agreed, follow-up actions clearly defined and lessons learned captured. To this end, IEA proposed a process (submitted to FC12 for endorsement), which reflects the need to institutionalize and strengthen the culture of evaluations in CGIAR. This process takes into consideration the different functions and responsibilities of the various entities, allowing timely consideration of the evaluation, its recommendations, and proposed next-steps, while ensuring accountability and utility of an evaluation.

Learning from evaluations – next steps

Emerging issues common to both the ongoing and finalized evaluations and reviews have been noted. These issues and findings relate to the definition and interpretation of a CRP and how this is related to the level of W1&2 funding and issues with implementation of research performance management, among others.

IEA will therefore commission a synthesis report of the first five completed evaluations and reviews, as well as emerging findings from ongoing evaluations. The report will draw on and highlight lessons learned and patterns with respect to system processes and results.

TABLE 1: Schedule of Evaluations

Schedule of Evaluations	2014			2015												
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
CRP Evaluation																Final Report & Mgmt response
PIM																
Inquiry																
Reporting																PIM: April 2015
MAIZE																
Inquiry																
Reporting																MAIZE: April 2015
WHEAT																
Inquiry																
Reporting																WHEAT: April 2015
AAS																
Inquiry																
Reporting																AAS: April 2015
Livestock and Fish																
Preparatory																
Inception																
Inquiry																
Reporting																L&F: April 2016
GRISP																
Preparatory																
Inception																
Inquiry																
Reporting																GRISP: April 2016
WLE																
Preparatory																
Inception																
Inquiry																
Reporting																WLE: April 2016
CCAFS																
Preparatory																
Inception																
Inquiry																
Reporting																CCAFS: April 2016
RTB																
Preparatory																
Inception																
Inquiry																
Reporting																RTB: April 2016
QA support to CCEEs Humidtropics; Grain Legumes; Dryland Cereals; Dryland Systems; A4NH																
QA support																Scheduled for mid- 2016